

CHOEROPSIS LEIDY, 1852 (ARTIODACTYLA): PROPOSED
CONSERVATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS. Z.N.(S.)2407

By Robert M. Schoch and Spencer G. Lucas (*Yale University, P.O. Box
6666, New Haven, Connecticut 06511, U.S.A.*)

The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to suppress a name, which so long as it remains an available name, represents a potential threat to the often used and widely accepted generic name of the pygmy hippopotamus, *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852.

2. S. G. Morton (1844, p. 15) proposed the binomen *Hippopotamus minor* for the skull of a small, extant hippopotamus from western Africa. With regard to this proposal, Morton (1849, p. 235) later quoted a long personal letter from H. Falconer who stated that 'Cuvier had preoccupied the specific name of *H. minor* for this small European fossil species, which he called both *H. minor* and *H. minutus*.' Although Falconer's statement technically was inaccurate (Desmarest, 1822, p. 388 named *H. minor*), Morton (1849, p. 232) proposed the name *H. liberiensis* Morton, 1849 to replace *H. minor* Morton, 1844. Since *H. minor* Morton, 1844 was a junior primary homonym of *H. minor* Desmarest, 1822, *H. minor* Morton, 1844 is permanently invalid (Art. 59a), and Morton (1849) correctly replaced it with *H. liberiensis* Morton, 1849.

3. J. Leidy (1852a, p. 52) removed *H. liberiensis* Morton, 1849 from *Hippopotamus* Linnaeus, 1758 and made it the type species of the new genus *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852. Leidy (1852b, p. 213) later proposed the new generic name *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852 to replace the name *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852 because he believed *Choerodes* was preoccupied by *Chaerodes* White, 1846 (type species *C. trachyscelides* White, 1846), an insect genus.

4. White's (in White & Butler, 1846, p. 12) original spelling of the name *Chaerodes* used an unambiguous ligature, but Leidy's (1852a, p. 52) original spelling of the name *Choerodes* used an ambiguous ligature. Thus, for example, MacAlister (1873, p. 494) spelled the name of Leidy's taxon '*Chaerodes*'. Nevertheless, on the same page in Leidy, 1852a, as the original spelling of *Choerodes*, the same ligature is used to spell 'Phoenixville', a town in Pennsylvania (U.S.A.). This indicates that '*Choerodes*', not '*Chaerodes*', was the correct original spelling of *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852. This conclusion also is supported by the fact that Leidy, 1852a, probably derived the name *Choerodes*, and later (Leidy, 1852b) the name *Choeropsis*, from the Greek 'choiros' ('pig'), normally written as choeros or choerus (for example, the names of the extant hogs *Hylochoerus* and *Phacochoerus*). Since *Choerodes* Leidy,

1852 differs from *Choerodes* White, 1846 in one letter, the two names are not, as Leidy believed, homonyms (Art. 56a). Therefore, Leidy (1852b, p. 213) need not have replaced *Choerodes* with *Choeropsis*.

5. The generic name *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852, however, has been cited repeatedly in the zoological literature since Leidy, 1852b. Pertinent examples include Milne-Edwards (1868–1874, p. 44), Ritchie (1930, p. 204), Cristino (1958, p. 389), Sidney (1965, p. 119), Corbet (1969, p. 387), Saban (1971, p. 306), Olivier (1975, p. 211) and Walker (1975, p. 1370). In addition, the name *Choeropsis* is widely known and appears on labels in the many zoological gardens where pygmy hippopotami are displayed.

6. Therefore, recognition and validation of the name *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852 and its substitution for the well-known name *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852 do not appear to be in the best interests of stability and universality of the zoological nomenclature.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is therefore requested:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the generic name *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852 for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy;
- (2) to place the generic name *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852 (gender: feminine), type species, by monotypy, *Hippopotamus liberiensis* Morton, 1849, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology;
- (3) to place the specific name *liberiensis* Morton, 1849, as published in the binomen *Hippopotamus liberiensis* (specific name of the type species of *Choeropsis* Leidy, 1852), on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology;
- (4) to place the generic name *Choerodes* Leidy, 1852, as suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above, on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology.

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